

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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Honey Show and Craft Fair

Our annual honey show is on Saturday, October 12th. If you are not already prepared there is still time to select your best honey, prepare your wax and practise some cake-baking. Whatever class you are entering, make sure you read the instructions and rules very carefully and then follow them to the letter. The event is being held at St. John's Church Hall, Foxbush, Hildenborough TN11 9HT. Entries should be brought along between 9.30am and 10.30am, ready for judging to begin at 10.30am. The show and craft fair will be open to everyone from 2pm, after judging has been completed.

Bees in the Bedroom



We were contacted by the owner of a 16th century farmhouse who had lived with bees behind the hung tiles on the other side of his bedroom wall for three years.

Although they kept part of the wall nice and warm he had decided that clearing up to 40 bees a day from the bedroom was getting a bit much.

The tiles were hanging by old wooden pegs to the batons (not a nail in sight) and only held in place by a little lime mortar. They came away easily with only a few breakages.

The colony had swarmed earlier in the year so was not as big as it would have been.



The comb was removed and placed into frames where possible.

The Beevac was used to collect bees throughout the extraction.

The homeowner was very happy to be given a few pounds of honeycomb which was placed in a flour sieve above a Pyrex bowl.

It's quite late in the season to rehome bees so we gave them some drawn comb with stores. We'll inspect in a few weeks.

Sarah Rapley and John Farrow

Meetings

The branch is hoping to run an additional meeting this month on Tuesday 22nd October at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall. Details will be circulated by email.

The AGM and award of Honey Show prizes will be on Tuesday 19th November. Papers will be issued by email during October.

Volunteer Wanted for School Observation Hive

We have been keeping bees at Tonbridge School for more than 15 years, aided along the way by local beekeepers including John Hendrie, Peter Hutton and John Farrow. We currently have three school hives looked after by two members of staff and an active club of boys, one of whom acquired his own hives in Ightham last year.



In 2018 the school science centre was refurbished and renamed the Barton Science Centre, after the Nobel Prize-winning chemist. An observation hive was commissioned and installed after a donation from a family and John Hendrie helped to install a colony of bees. This initial colony lasted about 18 months before varroa and the neglect during the Covid pandemic led to its sad demise.

We would love to get the observation colony going again for the boys at Tonbridge but also for the visitors we get from local schools: we host primary schools every Wednesday afternoon to do experiments led by the Tonbridge School boys. However, we lack the expertise to get the colony up and running again. Therefore, we are hoping that one of the local beekeeping branch members might fancy taking on this challenge with us. We would provide all equipment, pay for travel costs and can even offer a lovely lunch when visiting. If you are interested please get in touch with John Richards. john.richards@tonbridge-school.org.

Ready for Winter at Hilbert Road



The season has been challenging for our bees. The cold, wet spring led to colonies being fed very late into the season due to a lack of forage. Planned divisions also failed. In spite of the early difficulties the colonies have thrived, and we now have seven colonies at Hilbert Road. Only two produced a honey crop: a total of about 80lbs. All but one colony will be taking a full super into the winter. Hopefully this will negate the need to feed fondant and the bees will be better fed with the nutrients in their own honey stores.

A friend who removes bees from buildings called me to say that he had collected a colony of bees which had moved into some retired bee keeping equipment. Sadly, the beekeeper had been unwell and was unable to deal with the situation.



The bees had managed to find their way into some super boxes (fortunately they contained frames) and Glen delivered them to Hilbert Road. They have been placed in the quarantine area until we can properly inspect them.

We were able to have a quick look at the weekend before the rain came. The colony is very strong. The bees have been doing their own thing for some time, so it was good to note that their temperament was good and that they have plenty of stores. We will let them settle in before inspecting in the spring.

Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

For Sale: Bees & Equipment



A new beekeeper, in Shoreham, near Sevenoaks, has decided that beekeeping is not for him and would like to sell his bees and equipment. He is willing to consider any reasonable offer. He has two national hives, one with an active colony and a super on top, and another empty hive. Both have stands, floors, brood boxes, queen excluders, crown boards and roofs. There are three supers. He also has two poly nucs, one drainer, two English feeders and one frame feeder, also some tools including a smoker and queen catcher. Also, a large sized bee suit and gloves. Contact: Kevin Andrews andrews711@me.com 07791863888 or Laura Andrews 07947414629.

Honey's Healing Powers

Andrew Gibb's talk to the branch in September covered all the major products available from the hive, including several that the average domestic beekeeper might not consider.

He started with everyone's favourite: honey. Andrew briefly touched on the problems of mislabelling and adulteration of cheap commercial honey, which perhaps should be renamed "honey-flavoured syrup". All we can do is to emphasise that our honey might be slightly more expensive, but is the genuine article. As well as being a food substance, honey has antiseptic qualities, and can be used for treating infected wounds where bacteria have developed resistance to conventional medication. Honey is also widely used as an ingredient in cosmetics.

The next common product is pollen. We know this contains protein and is important nutrition for developing brood. It is available as a health food supplement. We are also very familiar with wax, which historically was the major reason for keeping bees. Many mediaeval monasteries would have used wax to make candles for use in church, as is still the case for high days and holidays.

Andrew then moved on to some of the less familiar products. Royal jelly is used as a health food supplement, but extracting it can disrupt the natural breeding cycle of the bees. Propolis also has antiseptic properties and is used in the preparation of treatments for mouth ulcers and sore throats. However, harvesting propolis is labour-intensive and therefore probably an interesting activity for the home beekeeper, rather than a source of income.

This brings us on to the last two more unpleasant options. Bee venom does have a place in medicine and can be used as a treatment to alleviate arthritis by increasing the flow of body fluids to the joints. Probably not something you should try at home. And finally, wax moth. It was not surprising to hear that fishermen use wax moth larvae as bait, but it seems the little beasties do have one saving grace. Apparently they are suitable for use in testing medicines. This is a developing technology, which means that testing on small mammals can be avoided.

We would like to thank Andrew for taking the time to visit us, and deliver a thought-provoking talk.

Liz Birchenough

The Big Buzz

The Big Buzz is Kent Scouts' community impact event for October 2024, aiming to raise awareness about the importance of bees and other pollinators.



Kent Scouts are encouraging Districts, Groups, Sections and individuals to take part and help to support Kent Beekeepers Association, with a particular focus on the current threat posed by Asian Hornets. Martin Barrett and I attended a meeting of St John's Cub Scouts at Somerhill School. The youngsters were divided into groups to learn about bees and pollinators. Henry, a scout leader and also the Head of Science at Somerhill, looks after their colonies of honey bees and was able to lead the cubs in an apiary visit where they were able to get up close and personal with the bees. Martin and I led a discussion about

pollinators and the threats they face in the environment, which included the invasive Yellow-Legged Asian Hornet.

The cubs also made bug hotels and solitary bee houses. All the activities contributed towards a new badge: The Big Buzz.

Sue Knights

Send photos or articles for the newsletter to: marystaffurth@yahoo.com

Go to our website for all the latest beekeeping news: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>